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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [PTER](#) [SY](#) [IS](#) [LE](#)
SUBJECT: LEBANON: ADDITIONAL NON-MILITARY SUPPORT TO
STRENGTHEN GOL INSTITUTIONS

REF: NEA/ELA-EMBASSY BEIRUT 03/25/08 E-MAIL

Classified By: CDA Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

11. (C) In response to Department's request for Embassy Beirut's suggestions on how USG can enhance its support for the GOL (ref), we have compiled the following list of additional programs which could be funded to strengthen GOL national institutions. SEPTELS will cover our suggestions for support of military institutions and ESF conditionality considerations. As a result of the current political impasse, the GOL needs additional donor support in order to improve delivery of government services, reinforce the legitimacy of the current government and maintain national stability. End Summary.

New Proposals for USG Assistance Programs

12. (C) Embassy Beirut country team has developed the following recommendations for additional non-military assistance programs:

-- USD 2 million for the Trade Development Authority: These funds would be used to expand on previous TDA feasibility studies and work to provide technical assistance to both the government and private sector for new investment policies or business expansion.

-- USD 5 million for the Food and Drug Administration to fund a technical laboratory to improve and maintain the quality standards for niche Lebanese agricultural products which could then be admitted as export products into the U.S. and other international markets. This program would be modeled on similar efforts in Egypt, which increased the profitability of the local agricultural sector.

-- USD 9 million for Aviation:

- Ask the Federal Aviation Administration to conduct a technical review of the Beirut International Airport. FAA certification is needed for the return of U.S. carrier services. The cost for the technical review would be minimal, as regional FAA officials based in the UAE could travel inexpensively to Lebanon.

- USD 5 million to update the NORTEL communications

network at the Beirut International Airport. At the current time, there is no unified communication network at the airport to deal with safety or security emergencies.

- USD 4 million to fund the purchase of three OSHKOSH fire trucks to replace aged and damaged emergency response equipment at the airport.

- USD 5 million for USAID to rehabilitate additional public schools. Currently, USAID is rehabilitating 300 Lebanese schools. Additional funds would expand that effort which reaches into many local communities and improve delivery of critical educational programs.

- USD 10 million for PL-480 shipment of wheat: Given the shortage of wheat and the rising price of bread in Lebanon, a one-time shipment of 50,000 metric tons of wheat will help to relieve pressure on consumers and demonstrate the GOL's ability to assist citizens during economic downturns.

- USD 5 million for USAID "Cash for Work" program: USAID implemented similar programs in FY06 and FY07. Additional funds would be used to provide employment opportunities for Lebanese youth when school lets out in May-June.

- USD 20 million for road repairs: Poor infrastructure remains a top concern for Lebanese citizens. Major city roads and intercity highways are in desperate need of repair. This would be a visible program which would allow the GOL to demonstrate its ability to address critical national needs.

- USD 20 million for university campuses in the south: These funds would be used as an initial investment to

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encourage the several USG-supported universities in Lebanon (American University of Beirut, Lebanese American University, and Hagazian University) to open satellite branches in south Lebanon. (Note: Long-term sustainability will likely require financial subsidies beyond the initial USD 20 million investment.)

- USD 10 million to fund standardized electoral practices: The Ministry of Interior is charged with conducting both the 2009 parliamentary elections and the 2010 municipal elections. DRL and other donors have funds in place to provide training and technical advice to the Ministry of Interior, but the Ministry is woefully under-equipped to implement these elections in an internationally accepted way. While various aspects of electoral reform are still being decided politically, the Ministry will need financial support for basic measures, such as improving access to polling stations for physically challenged persons, funding an independent electoral commission, and preparing a standard national ballot. Assuring professional performance by the Ministry of Interior will help to undermine claims of fraud.

- USD 20 million for future border security initiatives: The GOL and international donors are still formulating plans for the way forward on implementation of UNSC 1701, but recent UN reports confirm that security assistance along the borders should be supplemented with socio-economic measures to help local citizens replace income lost from smuggling activities. Civil-military cooperation units with the ability to fund local programs may be the way forward. Successful control over Lebanon's borders will help to strengthen not only Lebanese security forces, but also the government.

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